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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Hatzofe (lead story) and most media quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying Wednesday in testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that the U.S. has clarified to Israel "in no uncertain terms" that construction in the "E-1" Jerusalem-Ma'aleh Adumim corridor "would contravene American policy." Israel Radio quoted an Israeli official as saying that Secretary Rice's comment represents the United States'

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traditional policy. However, the radio quoted Secretary Rice as saying that "it is important not to lose sight of the larger picture" as Israel has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip. Ha'aretz briefly mentioned Rice's remarks.

In its lead story, Yediot expects President Bush to tell PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas during his visit to the White House today that he must disarm Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The newspaper says that Abbas's visit will be solemn, but that the U.S. demand of him will be unequivocal. Ha'aretz reported that a senior State Department official told the newspaper on Wednesday that the U.S. administration expects to hear how Abbas plans to cope with the "inherent contradiction" between the status of Hamas as an armed terror organization and its intention to participate in the PA's political process. "It is something the Palestinians are grappling with," the official was quoted as saying, adding that the administration wants to know what the PA plans to do. Palestinian officials have said in the last few days that the PA does not intend to confront Hamas on this issue. Jerusalem Post reported that "U.S. sources" told the newspaper that at his meeting with Abbas, President Bush is likely to insist that Abbas bar Hamas from participating in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, but that he will not force Abbas to disarm the terrorist group. Jerusalem Post quoted sources in Washington as saying Wednesday that Abbas's visit is intended to be "low-key." Israel Radio says that the U.S. will try to find a compromise solution to the problem.

Ha'aretz writes that regarding the establishment of PA institutions, Bush is slated to tell Abbas to continue to accelerate efforts to ensure the rule of law. The newspaper reported that a replacement for Lt. Gen. William Ward, who was responsible for dealing with this issue on behalf of the U.S., will soon be named. Ha'aretz quoted State Department officials as saying that the U.S. is satisfied with the participation of Israel and the Palestinians in talks, but that the "cooperation can be improved." Ha'aretz writes that Palestinian officials are expected to tell the Americans that Israel has been dragging its feet in negotiations. The newspaper quoted State Department

officials as saying that the U.S. would like to see the pace of talks on the economic rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip "pick up a bit."

Yediot (Shimon Shiffer) reported that Sharon's bureau has told the U.S. administration ahead of the Bush-Abbas meeting that Israel's patience is wearing out, that Abbas does not control the Palestinian territories, and that Israel will not offer him any gestures. Yediot cited the GOI's growing belief that King Abdullah II of Jordan cannot serve as a substantial element in the region. The newspaper also reported that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will not come to Israel.

Ha'aretz banners a remark made by Saddam Hussein at the opening of his trial in Baghdad Wednesday that he is still president of Iraq. Jerusalem Post told the story of an Israeli family of Iraqi origin, one of whose members was hanged 37 years ago by Saddam's regime for allegedly spying for the U.S. and Israel. Leading media quoted Secretary Rice as saying Wednesday in testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that U.S. troops could still be serving in Iraq in 10 years.

Leading media (lead stories in Maariv and Ha'aretz (English Ed.)) cited a warning given by the Health Ministry's DG on Wednesday that the avian influenza could reach Israel within the next few days. Ha'aretz reported that officials from Israel's Veterinary Service will meet with their Jordanian counterparts this morning to coordinate measures against bird flu. The newspaper says that it is not yet clear whether officials from the PA's veterinary service will also attend the meeting, which will take place at the Allenby Bridge. Ha'aretz quoted FM Silvan Shalom as saying that Israel and Jordan were trying to forge plans for a joint effort against the flu, since it is considered likely to spread to the Middle East in the near future. He was quoted as saying that Israel would also be happy to cooperate with other countries on this issue. Ha'aretz reported that Israeli officials denied reports published in several Arab newspapers that Israeli officials would also meet on the issue with counterparts from other Arab states, including Syria and Iraq. The newspaper quoted the officials as saying that there would be indirect coordination between Israel and other Arab states, since Jordan was coordinating its moves with both Israel and with its Arab neighbors.

Maariv reported that Hamas is "on the verge of splitting." The newspaper says that Mahmoud Zahar leads the movement's extremist line, while its moderate side is headed by Ismail Haniya, who advocates gathering weapons from activists and putting an end to terrorist attacks.

Ha'aretz reported that officials in Jerusalem have clarified on Wednesday that Israel has no new plans to separate Israel and Palestinian traffic on the roads of the West Bank. The clarification comes in the wake of harsh U.S. criticism of the restrictions imposed by Israel on Tuesday on Palestinian vehicular traffic in the territories.

Ha'aretz reported that before dawn on Thursday, Abbas met with Meretz-Yahad head Yossi Beilin, who was also visiting Washington. The Palestinian leader told Beilin that the purpose of his trip to Washington is to ensure the Palestinian elections will be held as scheduled and without interference despite Hamas' participation. Ha'aretz writes that Beilin told Abbas that it is vital that the PA make a commitment to disarm Hamas immediately after the elections are held.

Ha'aretz reported that Peace Now is advocating the immediate evacuation of 26 isolated settlements in the West Bank as a follow-up to the disengagement from Gaza.

Yediot quoted Maj. Gen. (in the reserves) Amos Gilad, the head of the Defense Ministry's Political-Security Bureau, as saying Wednesday that Israel has no interest in Syrian President Bashar Assad being toppled. Gilad was quoted as saying: "The Israeli interest is to turn Syria from a terror-sponsoring country into a peace-seeking country." Yediot also quoted senior diplomatic sources in Jerusalem as saying that the U.S. administration will soon increase its pressure on Assad's regime, but that it will prefer a situation in which Assad "repents" and abandons his instruments of terror rather than being deposed, because Muslim extremists could replace him.

Israel Radio and the Ha'aretz web site reported that

this morning, IDF soldiers arrested a 15-year-old Palestinian boy found to carrying weapons at the Hawara checkpoint south of Nablus. The youth aroused the suspicion of troops, who subsequently found in his possession a 52-millimeter mortar shell and two knives. The youth said he was asked to smuggle the bomb through the checkpoint by members of a Palestinian armed group. The media reported on several other security-related incidents in the West Bank.

Yediot and Israel Radio reported that over 200 olive trees were uprooted and burned in the Palestinian village of Salem, east of Nablus, shortly after Sunday's terrorist attack in Gush Etzion. The media quoted local Palestinians as saying this was a retaliatory action by settlers. Ha'aretz reported that the IDF's Central Command has decided to cancel the military escort for Palestinian children on their way to school south of Hebron. The escort had been introduced to protect the children from attacks by settlers.

On Wednesday, Maariv reported that subsequent to a more stringent policy in recent weeks, the U.S. Defense Department and the U.S. Army refuse to let Israeli firms participate as subcontractors in Iraq, and that they reject bid offers by those companies. The newspaper notes that Israeli companies served as subcontractors in the past. Maariv cited assessments of unnamed sources that the new policy is related to a series of sanctions imposed on Israel by the U.S. administration over Israel's defense connections.

Yediot reported that on Wednesday, Amin Hussein (phon.), the speaker of Pakistan's parliament, met in Geneva with Israel's Deputy Education Minister, Knesset Member Majalli Whbee (Likud), and thanked him for Israel's aid proposal following the earthquake on the Indian subcontinent.

Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized:
"Israel has an interest in utilizing its current edge to shape the outlines of the next diplomatic move."

Veteran columnist Yaron London wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The lesser evil is to decide to let the Palestinians form their own democracy, without extending unsolicited help to them."

Diplomatic correspondent Efraim Ganor wrote in popular, pluralist Russian-language Novosty Nedely: "U.S. pressure on Israel ... and the Palestinian leader is unlikely to increase in the short-term; the U.S. isn't interested in weakening Abu-Mazen."

Block Quotes:

II. "Beyond the Holiday Table"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (October 20): "Israel has no time. Following the disengagement, it gained a valuable asset: control of the moral high ground and international legitimacy. But its control of this essential high ground is liable to be short-lived. As memory of the evacuation of Gush Katif fades, Israel's control of this ground will weaken. Violent incidents are liable to erase it completely. Therefore, Israel has an interest in utilizing its current edge to shape the outlines of the next diplomatic move. If it does not, this move will be defined, and perhaps even dictated, by others. And in that event, all the gains of the disengagement would be lost. Ariel Sharon also has no time. The disengagement from Gaza and his victory over Binyamin Netanyahu strengthened his position both among the general public and within his own party. Nevertheless, one long winter of discontent could deprive him of all this. A Hamas takeover of Gaza, bloodshed in Israel or a confrontation with the U.S. could return Sharon to that same political valley of the shadow of death from which he emerged thanks to his disengagement plan.... It is acceptable to enjoy the lull for one more moment. It is acceptable to enjoy the last fruits of this sweet disengagement holiday. But immediately after the [current Jewish] holiday [of Sukkoth], we must throw ourselves back into work with all our energy. Both Israel and Sharon must make it clear to themselves

where they are headed."

II. "Let Us Not Obstruct Elections in the PA"

Veteran columnist Yaron London wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (October 20): "The elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, or the Palestinian parliament, are scheduled to be held in less than three months. Our neighbors view them as an important chapter in the history of their people.... If the elections are conducted properly, the Palestinian nation will be able to boast of a democratic regime, a phenomenon that does not exist in any Arab state apart from Lebanon. We have already seen the initial signs of democracy in the elections for PA chairman.... It should be understood that in the conditions of semi-occupation that exist in the areas of Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank], denying help means obstructing and possibly preventing the elections.... [But] the militants will not disarm, and the PA leadership will not become entangled in a civil war in order to force them to do so.... If we do not firmly oppose the inclusion of Hamas in the elections, we will thereby be admitting that we have waived an important clause in our agreements with the PA and will undermine the American effort to crush the terror organizations. Hamas, whose leadership sits in Damascus, is on their blacklist. We are between the hammer and the anvil, but we must make up our minds. The lesser evil is to decide to let the Palestinians form their own democracy, without extending unsolicited help to them. Hamas is a large and complex entity: not everyone who supports the social aspects of the Hamas ideology is a bloodthirsty individual. We will handle the villains as we handle terrorists who are not under a parliamentary guise."

III. "The 'Rais' Has Been Authorized to Ask..."

Diplomatic correspondent Efraim Ganor wrote in popular, pluralist Russian-language Novosty Nedely (October 20): "The [Israeli] sanctions on the Palestinians [subsequent to Sunday's terrorist attacks] caused a odd reaction in Washington. ... The Israeli decision to restrict the Palestinians' travel was harshly criticized by the U.S. Department of State. The U.S. envoy in the Middle East William Ward called on Israel to take steps to 'ease the daily plight of the Palestinian people, while [State Department] Spokesman [Sean McCormack] said that although Israel, like the U.S., is a victim of terrorist attacks ... [Israel should] act in terms of long-term peace, stability and security.... Although the U.S. also called on the Palestinian Authority to fight terror more intensely, this request obviously would not have any practical results. The PA's inability to do anything in this direction is absolutely clear. It is considered in Jerusalem that the Bush-Abu Mazen meeting would turn out to be a series of complaints about various Israeli actions.... U.S. pressure on Israel ... and the Palestinian leader is unlikely to increase in the short-term; the U.S. isn't interested in weakening Abu Mazen."

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